

The last athlete in the series is Drake University's power runner Johnny Bright. Bright received national attention for his athletic endeavors and for the extreme abuse he suffered during a contest at Oklahoma A&M in 1951. Although no penalties were assessed, photographers from the *Des Moines Register* garnered a Pulitzer Prize for capturing the abuse. After graduating, Bright prospered for 12 years in the Canadian Football League before working as an esteemed educator and public speaker in Edmonton. Bright died from anesthetic complications during a knee surgery at age 53. Several schools in Edmonton and the field at Drake Stadium are named in his honor.

Chapman's project benefits from his large array of experiences, his familiarity with regional publications, and personal contacts with his subjects' friends and fans. Unfortunately, he compensates for limited evidence by using spurious detail, extrapolation, and conjecture. He often makes baseless parallels between the athletes, and chapters conclude with clumsy assemblies of commemorative quotes. *Triumph and Tragedy* may appeal to book-buying sports enthusiasts with a penchant for drama, but most historians will be disenchanted by the book's meritocratic maxims, purely descriptive chronicles, and lack of engagement with scholarly literature.

*Hmong America: Reconstructing Community in Diaspora*, by Chia Youyee Vang. The Asian American Experience Series. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010. xxii, 200 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. \$75.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

Reviewer Joseph Andrew Orser is visiting assistant professor of history at the University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire. His dissertation (Ohio State University, 2010) was "American Family, Oriental Curiosity: The Siamese Twins, the Bunker Family, and Nineteenth-Century U.S. Society."

Chia Youyee Vang's volume is grandly conceived and precisely executed. Covering the period since the U.S. retreat from Vietnam — a retreat that left America's anti-Communist Hmong allies hanging precariously in Communist Laos — *Hmong America* frames the experiences of the more than 130,000 Hmong who came to the United States as political refugees via the lens of diaspora. Its true focus, though, is the experience of the Hmong community in Minneapolis and St. Paul, what some call the "Hmong capital of the world" (58).

Using extensive interviews and observations, Vang moves beyond official narratives of immigration and forced migration to get to know refugees "as people rather than as subjects" (4). Vang is well positioned to do this; she was resettled in Minnesota in 1980 at the age of nine after fleeing Laos with her family in 1979. *Hmong America* is the first

book-length history to emerge from the Hmong community, and Vang credits her knowledge of the language and culture for her ability to write a study that non-Hmong scholars could not. "Insider status increases the researcher's access to information that marginalized groups . . . may not feel comfortable sharing with an outsider" (xv). As a result, Vang authors a complex analysis that highlights the agency of the Hmong community in the Twin Cities.

Agency appears in Vang's discussion of the strategies refugees pursued in reconstructing an ethnic community in the United States. Hmong strategies of resettlement differed markedly from federal policies that tried to disperse the Hmong throughout the country. Officials believed that isolation from large concentrations of Hmong would allow individual families to assimilate into mainstream American culture more effectively. Instead, Hmong found the isolation alienating and used kinship and extended family ties to embark on internal migrations that resulted in heavy concentrations in Minnesota and Wisconsin. By 2007, those two states had the largest concentration of Hmong in the country.

Within ethnic communities, Hmong engaged in a process of reinvention. On the one hand, relationships between clans that were rivals in Laos were renegotiated, fostering an atmosphere of mutual support. On the other hand, divisions along religious lines grew as some Hmong became Christians while others adapted traditional shamanism to their new home. Ironically, both groups felt more American as a result; Christians believed that they were behaving like Americans while non-Christians believed that the ability to practice their own religion meant they belonged in the United States. Similarly, generational conflicts resulted in competing cultural expressions. Rival celebrations of the Hmong New Year emerged: some attempted to hold on to Hmong tradition; others celebrated a fluid Hmong American culture. "In sum, Hmong people have made sense of their lives within their disparate American communities by utilizing traditions from the place they left behind to maintain some continuity and inventing new practices in their new homeland" (153).

This book could have done more to place its actors in the larger global community. Vang makes provocative statements about the relationship between Hmong in America and in the rest of the diaspora but does not pursue the implications. For instance, Vang contends that there is a growing feeling among Hmong in other countries that Hmong in the United States are too Americanized and less authentically Hmong, a fascinating observation that demands further discussion. Nonetheless, Vang has skillfully charted the strategies for building community that have shaped Hmong America.